

ICDL to empower the disabled with computer skills to help increase their job prospects

Specific standards and procedure are set to accommodate people with special needs

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ICDL GCC Foundation has recently announced major plans to extend the benefits of the ICDL program to people with disability. This reinforces ICDL GCC Foundation's stand that IT literacy should be accessible to all individuals, irrespective of their age, background, gender, and physical abilities. To further this cause, the ECDL Foundation, the worldwide governing body of the ICDL program, has set specific procedures and standards for accrediting organizations that provides training and testing to disabled people. ICDL GCC Foundation, the regional arm of the ECDL Foundation is responsible for implementing these procedures and standards in the Gulf region.

Research shows that disabled people are often discouraged and leave school with inadequate skills, especially in the area of reading, creating a barrier to further education and good employment prospects. Today it is recognized that obtaining IT literacy can greatly increase employment opportunities in society with ICDL certification being a leader in this domain. The ECDL Foundation, in partnership with international organizations and experts in the field of learning for the disabled, have identified necessary modifications, to make the ICDL learning and testing more friendly. This involves using simple language and more control keys to better explain the functionality of basic computer usage.

"People with disability have proven that their impairment should not be a deterrent in achieving their goals and being successful. ICDL GCC Foundation has been supporting various projects that play a vital role in helping people with special needs realise their potential by providing the required support and training and open up ample opportunities for them to contribute in the development of the society," said Jamil Ezzo, Director General, ICDL GCC Foundation.

"ICDL GCC Foundation strongly believes that no one should be left behind and everyone should be part of the digital society. Our plan is to empower the physically impaired with essential computer skills to reinforce the fact that these individuals form an integral part of our society. The IT training received by disabled people will help in instilling confidence and help them realise their goals and aspirations," he added.

ICDL GCC Foundation is working closely with selected vendors to design content in both English and Arabic languages with specific consideration given to the disabled to offer special assisting technologies that integrate with ICDL content like, screen readers; as well as the development of ICDL Braille-based textbooks, while meeting the international standards of the ICDL program. Furthermore, the ECDL/ICDL regulations will permit an additional 15 minutes on the test time, as well as allowing assistance during the official test.

"We support all projects in the region that further IT literacy among the hearing impaired, visually impaired, people with mobility disabilities and cognitive or learning impediments. ICDL GCC Foundation is currently running a pilot program at Tamkeen, an initiative of H.H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and UAE Defence Minister, aimed at empowering the visually impaired," remarked Ezzo, "Another effort is being afforded to accredit the Rehabilitation & Employment Centre for Disabled People in Al Ain, which was set up under the guidance of H.H Lt. General Sheikh Saif Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Interior, UAE. These centres have been instrumental in boosting employment opportunities for the disabled and will join the growing number of institutions that are helping millions of people acquire essential computer skills around the world," concluded Ezzo.